

## Eileen

Eileen with a key lime  
headwrap is telling  
her dharma sisters  
about Wednesday night:  
*“well it’s finally all  
fell out now.”*

And she can’t look at anyone  
when she says it.  
They joke: *“well now you look  
something like John here,”*  
her big husband who sports  
a shaved head with his faded red flannel  
and serious beard, and they all get  
a good laugh in.  
But quiet John says he cut it off  
as a promise; he told his dying wife  
he would whenever the chemotherapy  
got the last of her hair.

I imagine them on Wednesday, pretty  
broke up— Eileen’s dried-up curls  
limp in her fingers; maybe  
it just slid off  
like loose snow  
from a roof. Maybe John  
stumbled in half-drunk,  
in love, whispered  
*“god damnit”*, his heart  
finally broken; and then scooped  
the hair from her hands  
like holy ashes.

Only he’d stuff the hair  
down into a bathroom trashcan  
and reach for his old-style  
barber’s razor, smoothing  
out a layer of silk  
white onto his scalp, watching  
his hard face  
in the mirror.

They were probably still surprised  
by each other’s faces  
at the sangha meeting—

that clean openness  
of their foreheads.  
I saw that every time  
they looked at each other,  
their eyes widened a bit,  
like looking at the person  
they loved scared them.